

Self-Presentation and Audience Analysis of Female Tiktok Bloggers

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Abstract. TikTok has been on a roll since 2019, with female we-media being the main force of TikTok creators. Among the rare researches on female "we media" on TikTok, most of them focus on platform sampling analysis, instead of audience feedback and group analysis based on the whole communication process. This study conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 female bloggers' audiences and concluded that female "we media" featured strong gender awareness, sophisticated production and aesthetic value catering. In the audience group, there is a weak social network and a strong sense of female identity, but the gender barrier has not been broken. Breaking stereotypes and gender barriers, balancing the relationship between business and aesthetic value catering, is a new breakthrough for the development of female "we media".

Keywords: TikTok; Female Bloggers; semi-structured interview; media; self-presentation.

1. Introduction

With the impact of new media technologies on the news industry, short video has become one of the most influential communication methods. TikTok, a popular short video platform since 2018, has more than 800 million users. Short video has increasingly become a social platform for people to show themselves, find identity and make friends with each other. In short videos, women account for more than half of the total. The average number of short videos posted by female creators on TikTok is much higher than that of male creators, and the number of female creators is 1.52 times that of male creators [1]. The development of short video platforms has empowered women's "we media" and made it possible for women's discourse to be further civilianized and digitalized. Through the visual presentation of body symbols and the linguistic output of conceptual symbols on social media, women present themselves and construct female groups in public space.

In the past studies on female we-media, most of the research objects focus on female bloggers themselves, and there is a lack of research and analysis on the huge group of their audiences. Starting from the audience group of female bloggers of TikTok, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with ten interviewees of different ages, occupations and genders, and understood their views and acceptance of female bloggers and their influence on them from the aspects of female bloggers' image features, content delivery, group interaction and business behavior. In this study, the author first presupposes the results, and then conduct a qualitative analysis of the research results, and summarize and elaborate the conclusions. The author hopes to explore the self-presentation of female bloggers on TikTok, explore the output and embodiment of female values of female bloggers, and analyze the impact on their audience groups.

2. Research Methods

This study conducted qualitative research through semi-structured interviews. According to the relevant studies, users aged 18-30 account for 71% of the total. Therefore, the interviewees in this study are the viewers of the short videos of female TikTok bloggers aged between 18 and 30, who are college students and social workers. A total of 10 interviewees participated in the interviews,

including 6 female interviewees and 4 male interviewees. Since the interviewees are located in China and overseas, the main form of interview is online interview. The interview time was agreed with the interviewees and the interview was conducted on the Wechat platform. The online interview lasted about 30 minutes. During this time, each interviewee was interviewed in depth by referring to the interview outline to understand the real feelings and inner thoughts of each interviewee. In the preliminary preparation of the interview, visitors designed an interview outline centering on female bloggers of TikTok. The interview contents included the image characteristics of female bloggers, the interactive relationship with female bloggers, the views expressed by female bloggers, and the relationship between female bloggers and businesses, etc. The study hopes to explore the respondents' acceptance of female bloggers, their interaction levels with female bloggers, their recognition of the views conveyed by female bloggers, and whether the short videos of female bloggers will promote the commercial behaviors of viewers to some extent.

The hypothesis:

H1. Most viewers would prefer to watch short videos from female bloggers.

H2. The image characteristic impression that female bloggers bring to the audience is to break the traditional female stereotype and change the gender bias.

H3. Female bloggers tend to have higher follower stickiness and closer interaction.

H4. The ideas conveyed by female bloggers can be recognized by most viewers.

H5. The promotion of products by female bloggers in videos can stimulate the audience's desire to consume and buy products.

3. Results of the study

The following conclusions can be drawn from the arrangement and analysis of the interview contents.

In terms of liking, more people prefer female bloggers to male bloggers. Research shows that female we-media bloggers cover a wide range of fields and are more likely to be liked. Female respondents prefer to watch videos about beauty, life and food, while male respondents prefer to watch videos about life, science and sports. It is because female bloggers' videos are made with care, high quality, exquisite characterization and love for life, and delicate emotional expression. They present their true self-image on the platform TikTok, and a variety of female images are constantly enriched, but the traditional female characteristics dominated by male aesthetics still occupy the majority. On the one hand, TikTok's short video platform is a free platform for the masses, showing many people their courage to break stereotypes. On the other hand, under the influence of social aesthetics, most people still prefer traditional female images.

In the interaction between female bloggers and fans, the vast majority of respondents said that they would like their favorite bloggers, 4 respondents would comment on their favorite bloggers' videos, and only 2 respondents said that they would occasionally send private messages to the bloggers they follow to join her fan group. The interaction between female bloggers and their fans is not strong. From the perspective of operation mode, like only needs to double click the screen, comment needs to open the comment area for typing and private letter needs to open the main page of the blogger and then click to enter the private message interface, the operation difficulty level by level. This results in a hierarchy of "like" > "comment" > "private message".

In terms of the image characteristics of female bloggers, the interviewees mentioned the most frequently are beauty (6), delicacy (5), temperament (3), loveliness (2), easygoing (1), sunshine (1) and gentleness (1).

In terms of the ideas conveyed by female bloggers, eight of them expressed that they had received the ideas conveyed by female bloggers in the short video, such as "independence", "love of life", "self-confidence", "feminism" and "oneself is the most important", and agreed with their opinions. Only two respondents did not feel any sense of communication while watching the video.

The ideas of female bloggers are more likely to be convinced by viewers. At present, due to the rise of the We-media industry, the vast majority of bloggers with large fans are managed and operated by professional MCN companies. Most female bloggers and the teams behind them are willing to go to their audience's aesthetics and ideas for traffic. Some female bloggers are not afraid to abuse in order to gain large traffic, and dare to criticize mainstream concepts and aesthetics. Their videos have a wide range of influence. They attract more and more viewers to accept their own ideas through one video after another with the same character set. Young female viewers are easy to be influenced by the aesthetics and concepts in short videos, which will have some positive or negative impacts on their lives.

In terms of the relationship between female bloggers and business, most respondents believe that the bloggers they follow have professional teams behind them and make money through short videos. Six respondents (five of them were female) said they were guided to consume after watching videos of female bloggers.

The daily viewing time of TikTok short videos is increasing year by year, and the intensity of influence of short videos on individuals is also increasing with long-term viewing. Viewers begin to examine their own ideas and living conditions, and guide themselves toward what they think is the right idea and more or less strive for a positive life. Merchants are also targeting the stickiness and mass level of users on TikTok's short video platform, and have begun to insert advertisements into short videos. Female bloggers are also more likely to be loved by businesses because of their viewers' high love, high cooperation and good grass-planting effect. Their viewers will become interested in the products praised by the female bloggers and increase their knowledge of the brands. Guide some viewers to conduct a commercial behavior of consumption, and others may give priority to this product in future consumption choices. Compared with male viewers, female viewers are more likely to be attracted by advertisements and carry out some consumption behaviors. Moreover, it is found in the survey that viewers' willingness to consume has nothing to do with their age, but more to do with video content.

4. Discussion

4.1 Audience analysis

4.1.1 Cloakroom community: fan community weak ties network

In this interview, the audience did not have internal benign interaction with female bloggers and audiences as we expected. On the contrary, except a few of them are willing to have in-depth interaction, most interviewees are in the "cloakroom community" including female we-media, which is a dependent but short-lived and fragile community. No matter in the shallow level of interaction such as "like" or "no" behavior, or in the deep level of interaction such as comments, private messages, fan group interaction, etc., the community has a common emotion and feeling, and after the short fun and carnival, the members will return to their own lives and continue the original state [2]. There is almost no correlation between interpersonal living environment and social circle in the community, and there is obvious heterogeneity and extensiveness.

4.1.2 Identity attribution and Self-projection: From "Who I Am" to "Who we Are"

Chinese youth, especially Generation Z, enjoy the benefits of China's fewer children and economic development, but also bear the unprecedented pressure of competition. The huge group makes the youth subculture no longer a separated and marginal cultural phenomenon, but finds the group and organization, forming a new trend of networking, gamification and early maturation [3]. Female "We media" are both women and natural persons in the public sense. Although the audience did not show great interest in the communication process, in the broad sense of young identity, 10 interviewees in the interview showed a strong sense of identity of the blogger "worker", "social animal", "foodie" and so on. In the narrow sense of female identity, six of them are enthusiastic about "independent women". The audience's decoding and understanding of language symbols have far exceeded that of the

bloggers themselves, forming "convert mania" to a certain extent. The blogger himself becomes the object of the public's self-mapping and emotional identification with one or several traits, which becomes a kind of emotional catharsis and extends to the real world and emotional reactions and behaviors.

4.1.3 Gender Barriers: The Visibility of Female Voices and "Breaking the Circle"

Daniel Dai Young proposed visibility, believing that visibility is a right of human beings. "New media, due to its technical characteristics, can not only assume the role of 'free speech', but also realize the visibility of 'self-performance' that integrates multiple visual elements in a physical space" [4]. The visibility of women on short video platforms is reflected in women's right to be seen in their own way, which involves the discourse space given to women by the platform, women's active self-presentation and their resistance to authoritative discourse (allowing others to be seen).

The 6 women interviewed all expressed in the interview that female we-media is trying to speak for women, and believe that it has achieved a good "circle breaking" effect. It is worth mentioning that in the interviews of four male interviewees, their focus on female we-media was only limited to physical appearance and relatively high-quality content, and they did not pay attention to or even brush up on female group expression. In this sense, the three platforms, female subjects and male audiences all have factors that hinder the empowerment of women's voice visibility. A "demonstration" in the public domain has become the "self- euphoria" of female groups, but the gender barrier has not been really broken to achieve smooth communication.

4.2 Characteristics of female we-media

4.2.1 "Disenchantment" and "double enchantment": Gender consciousness and stereotypes

Baudrillard pointed out in Consumer Society that women are always the main objects involved in the process of transforming the body into aesthetic or erotic exchange value [5]. Dating back to thousands of years of Chinese history, women have been forced to live on the borderline of "aphasia" for a long time. Even in today's Chinese society, it is difficult for women to get rid of being stared at and consumed in the panoramic prison. Six female interviewees said that female we-media intentionally present their life attitudes and characteristics as women, such as "independence", "love of life", "confidence" and "love of oneself", in the public space, to hedge the stigmatization of women, and even neutralize women's characteristics to "discharm". Three interviewees also pointed out that the popularity of the word "pure desire" in China in the past three years is closely related to the visual presentation of "soft porn" by TikTok female appearance-level bloggers. This is a kind of "charm recovery", which returns mystery and attractiveness to female groups. This is also a new form of "charm recovery", which solidifies female stereotypes. Making it more difficult to escape the cycle of panoramic scrutiny.

4.2.2 Excellent production and delicate expression

Men are more likely to use news and game apps, while women are more likely to use consumer and video apps. Life sharing video is the main area for women [6]. From the very beginning of its development, Tiktok has taken "recording a good life" as its general tone. This is highly consistent with the advantages of women in related fields, so women and short videos have a high degree of fit, forming a set of narrative and cultural mechanisms. To our surprise, the results of this research shows that 10 interviewees have very consistent comments on female "we media", saying that compared with male bloggers, female "we media" bloggers are generally more sophisticated in content production and more delicate in expression. Female bloggers have an overwhelming advantage over men in video production and content expression.

4.2.3 Symbolized resonance: Aesthetic value catering and consumerism discipline

In our interview, all 10 interviewees believe that they pay attention to female bloggers through video cashing behavior, 6 of them admitted that they have bought the commodities promoted by bloggers more than once, and 5 of them are women. They say that the goods they buy are useless and that the

purchases happen because the blogger's words resonate and make people feel that the goods are really needed. Baudillard mentioned in the Consumer Society that in the consumer society, the purpose of consumer behavior is no longer to satisfy people's actual needs but to satisfy the continuously produced desires and identity [7].

According to Foucault, discipline is a special technology that regards individuals as both the object and tool of training, and it is a carefully calculated and lasting operating mechanism [8]. Since 2021, the production of professional short video content has shown vigorous vitality. Generation Z is playing an increasingly important role in online society, and online consumption is personalized and diversified [9]. The quality content and brand of female we-media have become the new favorite of the capital market [10]. The commercial value of "we media" accounts is generally positively correlated with the control of the team behind them, and the traffic of women's issues makes the team choose female bloggers. In order to maximize the commercial value, it is inevitable for the visual and verbal presentation of advertising to cater to the mainstream aesthetic and value.

5. Conclusion

Through the research, the author finds that the quality of female "we media" content on Tiktok is generally high, with huge commercial value and potential, and they generally recognize and deliberately express their female images. But there are also female stereotypes, over-commercialization and pandering to aesthetics. Among female "we media" audiences, female users have relatively high stickiness and form a kind of "community", but generally speaking, the gender barrier has not been broken, which is called the "self-pleasure" of female groups. Moreover, the interaction of users is much lower than the author expected, and there is a weak relationship between users, bloggers and users.

The development of short videos and other new media, combined with the unique advantages of women in the video field, on the one hand, gives women visibility empowerment and brings new opportunities for the development of digital feminism in China. On the other hand, it makes us fall into the technicalism myth. Big data algorithm makes female we-media limited in its own circle but does not break the gender barrier. The information explosion makes it difficult for users to focus on a single media and form an effective community with "we media". The rise of live streaming and e-commerce makes we-media lose its "character" and change from self-presentation to catering.

In past research, most of them carried out quantitative analysis such as platform sampling to quantitatively summarize and refine the characteristics of short videos. And few studies have conducted a separate analysis of female we-media. This study focuses on the feedback link in communication, and makes a qualitative analysis of the audio-visual presentation and value presentation of female short videos from the perspective of female short video audiences, so as to fill the relevant research gap. However, this study still has the limitation of sample bias and insufficient qualitative analysis.

In the future, female we-media is and will be the main force promoting the development of short video platforms and e-commerce for a long time, so it is imperative to study its characteristics. Due to time constraints, a questionnaire survey was not used to conduct a more extensive and comprehensive audience survey and analysis. How to break the gender barrier of short videos, how to form a strong relationship between fans and "we media", and how to balance the relationship between commercial development and the freedom of women's value presentation are urgent problems to be solved by the academic and industry in the future.

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